shown a negative growth of 3.5% as compared to last year. Efforts have also been made to provide a level playing field to domestic producers by calibrating the duty structure, which has been revised as and when considered necessary. In addition, all imports are subject to domestic laws, rules, regulations, procedures & technical standards applicable to the domestic products.

Most of our imports comprise raw materials, essential items, capital goods and petroleum crude. It is neither possible nor economically feasible to produce all our requirements within the country.

Improvement of SEZs

2292. SHRI K. RAMA MOHANA RAO :

SHRI RAMA MUNI REDDY SIRIGIREDDY :

Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that FICCI study calls for immediate steps to improve SEZs performance;

(b) if so, the steps Government have taken to implement the findings of the study; and

(c) whether Government have any plan to grant exemption to the SEZs from the purview of the labour laws ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI RAJIV PRATAP RUDI) : (a) and (b) The FICCI study briefly sets out some of the factors for success of Special Economic Zones (SEZs) while advocating a flexible labour policy for the zones. The study has suggested that power of the Labour Commissioner be delegated to the development Commissioner of SEZ to oversee the implementation of Labour laws within the zone.

(c) The Government has not finalised its views in regard to changes in Labour laws applicable to units in Special Economic Zones.

Assistance to Rubber Cultivators

2293. SHRI V. V. RAGHAVAN :

SHRI J. CHITHARANJAN :

Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state :

(a) whether there is a fall in prices of Tyres and Tubes produced in India during the period from 1995-1996 to 2000-2001 and from 31st March to 30th October, 2001;

(b) whether Government are aware that the Tyre and Tube Manufacturers are making conscious efforts to bring down the prices of natural rubber by importing natural rubber and other ways; and

(c) if so, the measures taken by Government to save the rubber cultivators from disaster and to protect rubber cultivation?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN) : (a) Yes, Sir. There has been a fall in the prices of different categories of tyres (6.5% to 16%) and tubes (nearly 10%) for the period 1995-96 to 2000-2001 and there is a marginal fall of nearly 2.3% in the prices of tyres only from March 2001 to September 2001;

(b) Based on the information available, it appears that there have been no conscious efforts on the part of Tyre Industry to bring down the prices of natural rubber by importing rubber. Price of any commodity is dependent on Demand-supply situation and comparable prevailing prices in domestic and international market, etc.

(c) In order to help stabilise the price of natural rubber and ensure a remunerative price to the rubber growers, Govt. of India has taken the following measures :

(i) Market intervention through STC in August 1997 for procurement of Natural Rubber on Govt. account. These procurement operations continued till April 2001;

(ii) Imposed a ban on 20-2-1999 on import of Natural Rubber against Advance Licences. This ban continues despite removal of Quantitative Restrictions from 1st April 2001 and import of Natural Rubber made free;

(iii) Notified on 12-9-2001, the minimum price of two most commonly used classes of Natural rubber; and

(iv) Recently approved a scheme for promotion of exports which *inter-alia* provides for extending financial assistance to exporters of Natural Rubber.